STATE OF CALIFORNIA GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor

#### **PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

505 VAN NESS AVENUE SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



October 27, 2021

Jeffrey T. Linam Vice President of Rates & Regulatory California-American Water Company 4701 Beloit Drive Sacramento, CA 95838-2434

Dear Mr. Linam,

The Commission has approved California-American Water Company's Advice Letter No. 1346, filed on September 20, 2021, regarding the Leak – High Bill Adjustment Policy for all service areas

Enclosed is a copy of the advice letter with an effective date of October 20, 2021 for the utility's files.

Please contact Bradley Leong at BL4@cpuc.ca.gov or 415-703-2307, if you have any questions.

Thank you,

#### /s/ROBIN BRYANT

Robin Bryant Water Division

**Enclosures** 

### CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION WATER DIVISION

### **Advice Letter Cover Sheet**

**Date Mailed to Service List:** September 20, 2021

Protest Deadline (20th Day): October 10, 2021

Review Deadline (30th Day): October 20, 2021

Requested Effective Date: October 20, 2021

Rate Impact: \$See AL

**Utility Name:** California American Water

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□3

☐ Compliance

**District:** All Service Area

□1

CPUC Utility #: U210W

Tier

Advice Letter #: 1346

**Authorization** 

Description:	Leak – High Bill Adjustment Policy		See AL%	
	ine for this advice letter is 20 days from t section in the advice letter for more info		was mailed to the service list. Please	
Utility Contact:	Kamilah Jones	<b>Utility Contact:</b>	Jonathan Morse	
Phone:	916-568-4232	Phone:	916-568-4237	
Email:	Kamilah.Jones@amwater.com	Email:	Jonathan.Morse@amwater.com	
DWA Contact:	Tariff Unit			
Phone:	(415) 703-1133			
Email:	Water.Division@cpuc.ca.gov			
	DWA USE	ONLY		
DATE	STAFF	co	COMMENTS	
[ ] APPROVED	[ ]WITH	IDRAWN	[ ] REJECTED	
Signature:	Cor	nments:		
Date:				





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www.amwater.com

P (916) 568-4251 F (916) 568-4260

September 20, 2021

ADVICE LETTER NO. 1346

TO THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Pursuant to General Order 96-B, California-American Water Company ("California American Water") (U210W) submits for filing the attached changes in tariff schedules applicable to all Districts:

#### Purpose:

The purpose of this advice letter filing is to request approval from the Commission to update and streamline California American Water's Leak or High Bill Adjustment Policy and Adjustment request form applicable to California American Water customers in all districts.

#### **Background:**

California American Water is submitting revisions to its Leak or High Bill Adjustment Policy and Adjustment request form to assist customers in requesting a loss of water adjustment and to standardize the process and documentation for all customers. The revised policy would simplify adjustment calculations and add transparency to high bill account adjustment criteria.

On July 27, 2017 California American Water filed Advice Letter 1173 to update its forms and related policy and process for customer water loss adjustments, which include leak adjustments. Advice letter 1173 was approved by the Commission on September 7, 2017 and implemented for customers in all districts on January 1, 2018.

The adjustment request form has been made available to our customers on California American Water's website and also provided to customers upon request. Through this Advice Letter, California American Water proposes the following modifications to the leak/high bill policy:

- Standardize adjustment method and calculation for all three high bill situations (leak, explained, unexplained high bill)
- Adding a flow meter or leak detection device requirement where warranted and appropriate for second adjustments within a 24-month period

The revised policy also provides further clarification on our guidelines applicable to all districts.

#### Tier Designation:

Pursuant to General Order No. 96-B, this advice letter is designated as a Tier 2 filing.

#### **Effective Date:**

California American Water requests that the tariff changes discussed above be made effective October 20, 2021.

#### **Service List:**

Pursuant to Section 4.3 of General Order No. 96-B, a copy of this advice letter is being sent to those entities listed in the attached service list. Copies of the detailed workpapers and documents supporting this Advice Letter have also been furnished to the Commission Staff.

#### **Protests and Responses:**

Anyone may submit a response or protest for this AL. When submitting a response or protest, please include the utility name and advice letter number in the subject line.

A response supports the filing and may contain information that proves useful to the Commission in evaluating the AL. A protest objects to the AL in whole or in part and must set forth the specific grounds on which it is based. These grounds<sup>1</sup> are:

- 1. The utility did not properly serve or give notice of the AL;
- 2. The relief requested in the AL would violate statute or Commission order, or is not authorized by statute or Commission order on which the utility relies;
- 3. The analysis, calculations, or data in the AL contain material error or omissions;
- The relief requested in the AL is pending before the Commission in a formal proceeding;
   or
- 5. The relief requested in the AL requires consideration in a formal hearing, or is otherwise inappropriate for the AL process; or
- 6. The relief requested in the AL is unjust, unreasonable, or discriminatory, provided that such a protest may not be made where it would require relitigating a prior order of the Commission.

A protest may not rely on policy objections to an AL where the relief requested in the AL follows rules or directions established by statute or Commission order applicable to the utility.<sup>2</sup> A protest shall provide citations or proofs where available to allow staff to properly consider the protest.

DWA must receive a response or protest via email (or postal mail) within 20 days of the date the AL is filed.<sup>3</sup> When submitting a response or protest, please include the utility name and advice letter number in the subject line.

The addresses for submitting a response or protest are:

**Email Address:** 

**Mailing Address:** 

Water.Division@cpuc.ca.gov

CA Public Utilities Commission Water Division 505 Van Ness Avenue San Francisco, CA 94102

On the same day the response or protest is submitted to DWA, the respondent or protestant shall send a copy of the protest to California-American Water Company at:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> General Order 96-B, General Rule 7.4.2

 $<sup>^{2}</sup>$  Id.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> General Order 96-B, General Rule 7.4.1.

Recipients: E-Mail: Mailing Address: CA ca.rates@amwater.com ...... 4701 Beloit Drive Rates..... Sacramento, CA 95838 Fax: (916) 568-4260 Sarah E. Leeper San Francisco, CA 94102 ..... Fax: (415) 863-0615 Vice President – Legal, Regulatory Sacramento, CA 95838 Fax: (916) 568-4260

Cities and counties that need Board of Supervisors or Board of Commissioners approval to protest should inform DWA, within the 20 day protest period, so that a late filed protest can be entertained. The informing document should include an estimate of the date the proposed protest might be voted on.

#### **REPLIES**

The utility shall reply to each protest and may reply to any response. Any reply must be received by DWA within 5 business days after the end of the protest period, and shall be served on the same day on each person who filed the protest or response to the AL.<sup>4</sup>

The actions requested in this advice letter are not now the subject of any formal filings with the California Public Utilities Commission, including a formal complaint, nor action in any court of law.

This filing will not cause the withdrawal of service, nor conflict with other schedules or rules.

If you have not received a reply to your protest within 10 business days, please contact me at (916) 568-4232.

CALIFORNIA-AMERICAN WATER COMPANY

/s/ Jeffrey T. Linam

Jeffrey T. Linam

Vice President - Rates & Regulatory

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> General Order 96-B, General Rule 7.4.3.

#### CALIFORNIA-AMERICAN WATER COMPANY ADVICE LETTER 1346 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION FOR STAFF

### Leak/High Bill Adjustment Policy – All Districts TABLE OF CONTENTS

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#### **SUMMARY**

Resolution W-4951 authorized California American Water to establish the Leak Adjustments Memorandum Account (LAMA) for its Monterey County District to track revenue shortfalls due to customer billing adjustments provided by the company. California American Water replaced bill adjustments with a discount program to comply with conservation policy goals. The discount program applied to customers who experienced a spike in their water consumption, which led to a high monthly bill. Resolution W-4951 states:

"The increased amount of water passing through a customer's meter could be a result of indoor or outdoor leaks (such as a running toilet or broken irrigation timer) or deteriorating infrastructure and mechanical failures (such as pinhole leak in the pipeline leading from the meter, failure of the pipeline connections or poor installation of devices in line with the pipe). These water losses are commonly categorized as real losses, and when experienced in the utility's water system, are major components of the utility's non-revenue water. The actual amount of water consumed by the customer, as verified by a properly functioning metering device, generates much of the utility's revenue."

The discount program generally adjusted the customer's bill by billing all usage above the first tier at the second tier rate. Because of the water supply limitations in Monterey, there were no adjustments to consumption on the bills. The LAMA was set to collect revenues caused by an adjustment to revenue and no changes to consumption, which led to real losses in water supplied.

Resolution W-4951 also states:

"Whether the spike was caused by a leak on the customer's property or by general use is often not known by Cal Am when the customer requests a billing adjustment. The current system cannot distinguish between a chronic high-end user who consumes more than their allotment, and thus should be billed at a higher rate, and a customer who experienced a onetime spike in their billed usage due to a leak. This interferes with the goal of conservation rate design to encourage water conservation and reduce excessive consumption, particularly among high-end users."

Resolution W-4951 ordered that California American Water close the LAMA as of December 31, 2014 and seek recovery of the balance in its next GRC or through an advice letter filing. D.15-04-007 authorized California American Water to incorporate leak adjustments in the revenue requirement on a going-forward basis.

"CAW, ORA, and MPWMD agree to the request as proposed by CAW to include an estimate of future leak adjustments in proposed expenses of each district."

California American Water's loss of water adjustment policy includes not only customer acknowledged or company confirmed leaks but also explained or unexplained higher water use. Therefore, California American Water establishes the following guidelines for customers seeking a Leak or High Water Use adjustment.

#### Leak or High Water Use Adjustment Policy

#### General

- 1) Allows for one leak or high water use adjustment for every 24-month period per premise.
  - The customer will be required to complete the Loss of Water Adjustment Request Form before the adjustment is processed. Documentation of repair date and/or confirmation of repair must be attached.
  - The customer will be required to pay the lower of either the actual bill containing the leak or twice their average monthly bill (based on the prior 12-month period, or the life of the account if it has been active for less than 12 months).
  - Customers will be offered a payment plan. Customers will be expected to pay normal bills
    plus an agreed upon additional payment amount until the higher amount is paid in full.
    Payment terms will range from three to 24 months. If more time is necessary, California
    American Water will work with customers on an individual basis.

#### **Process**

Leak or High Water Use Adjustment Process –

- 1. An account will be considered for adjustment when a customer advises of a leak or unusual period of high use at the premises or a leak is discovered/confirmed after a field service investigation. An unusual period or spike in high use followed by a return to normal use with no identified cause will be considered as "unexplained" high use.
- 2. Both customer acknowledged or company confirmed leaks and "unexplained" high use are eligible for adjustment under this adjustment policy. This policy also covers the use of "explained" high usage adjustments such as when the customer acknowledges higher water use but was either initially unaware of the amount of water used or impact (large bill) of such use. Some frequent examples of explained high use are:
  - pool filling or top off
  - irrigation system or appliance malfunction
  - accidentally left outside hose running
  - wildfire containment protection of personal property
- 3. These adjustments will be captured in the Loss of Water Adjustment portion of the uncollectible amount
- 4. The customer will be required to complete a Loss of Water Adjustment Request Form and provide evidence of repair before the adjustment is processed. The form will require the customer to:
  - document the cause of the leak
  - confirm the leak period (dates from discovery to repair)
  - include how the leak was repaired including repair/contractor receipts

- acknowledge ineligibility of another adjustment within 24 month of the first high bill occurrence
- 5. Once eligibility is confirmed, the customer will be required to pay either double the average bill amount or the amount of the bill incurred during the leak period, whichever is lower. Any difference in dollars billed will be credited to the customer's account.
  - The average bill amount is based on an average of 12 billing periods if available. At minimum, three (3) billing periods are required to establish average use. If less than three (3) billing periods are available, the company will use other methods to determine a reasonable average bill amount for the customer of record.
  - A maximum of two (2) bill periods will be considered for adjustment.
- 6. Details captured for each adjustment provided should include:
  - Account number
  - Customer name and service address
  - Type of leak or reason for high bill
  - Date of repair
  - Date of adjustment
  - Bill period covered by the adjustment
  - Adjustment Amount
  - Documentation of Extenuating Circumstances if adjustment is provided outside of the process described above.

#### Exceptions

Customers may be granted a second Leak or High Water Use adjustment within a 24 month period to avoid financial hardship if the following requirements are met:

- Second adjustment request is due to a leak or unexplained usage. No second adjustment is provided for explained high usage.
- Customer had a WaterWise Housecall inspection by California American Water's conservation team completed prior to 2<sup>nd</sup> adjustment.
- California American Water might require that an approved flow meter device is installed on the customer's premise at the customer's expense that will alert customer of continuous flows or leaks as condition of the 2<sup>nd</sup> adjustment.

A Second Leak or High Water Use adjustment would be calculated as follows:

Once eligibility is confirmed, the customer would be required to pay either four (4) times the average bill amount or the amount of the bill incurred during the leak period, whichever is lower. Any difference in dollars billed will be credited to the customer's account



### HIGH BILL ADJUSTMENT REQUEST FORM

TODAYS DATE:
REASON FOR REQUEST:
NAME ON ACCOUNT:
ACCOUNT NUMBER:
SERVICE ADDRESS:
BEST CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER:
DATE LEAK/HIGH USE IDENTIFIED:
DATE LEAK/HIGH USE REPAIRED OR CORRECTED:
PROVIDE DETAILED REASON FOR REQUEST AND SPECIFIC ACTION TAKEN TO REPAIR OR CORRECT THE ISSUE:
DID YOU INCLUDE Evidence (Receipt) of Leak or Issue Repair? (We require repair receipts or a description of how the leak or issue was corrected)
I hereby acknowledge the information submitted is true. I also understand submission of this form does not guarantee adjustment issuance. The company limits adjustments to one per customer per premise within a 24-month period.
Signature: Date:
This form should be completed, printed, signed, and submitted to one of the following:
Fax: (618) 433-4569 Email: <a href="mailto:csc.correspondencebilling@amwater.com">csc.correspondencebilling@amwater.com</a>
Mail: California American Water, Attention: Leak Adjustment, PO Box 578, Alton, IL 62002
Please allow up to 20 days for processing.

For details on how we treat the information you have provided to us on this form, and your privacy rights

and how to exercise them including how to exercise a "do not sell" opt-out visit our website

www.californiaamwater.com or contact us at 1-888-237-1333.

**WE KEEP LIFE FLOWING™** 

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